

**EXISTING LAND USE**

## EXISTING LAND USE

A detail inventory and examination of the existing land use in a community is important in the development of a Comprehensive Plan. A study of existing land use can: (1) identify the present pattern of development, (2) find out the facilities available in the community and thereby determine the adequacy at the present and for the future, (3) determine the locational requirement for improvement and extension of utilities and facilities, (4) help to find out the probable growth trends and the recommended zoning districts.

### Existing Land Use Within the Village

A detail lot by lot land use survey was conducted in April, 1968. The area of the survey included the Village proper as well as the planning area one mile outside the corporate limits. The use of every building and open land was recorded. This data has been compiled on a one inch to 200 feet scale color map as shown in Illustration 3. Standard land use color coding was used to designate each type of land use. The use of land and all properties was classified into one of the following categories: single family, commercial, public and semipublic, parks and recreation, industrial, railroad, streets and alleys and vacant or agriculture.

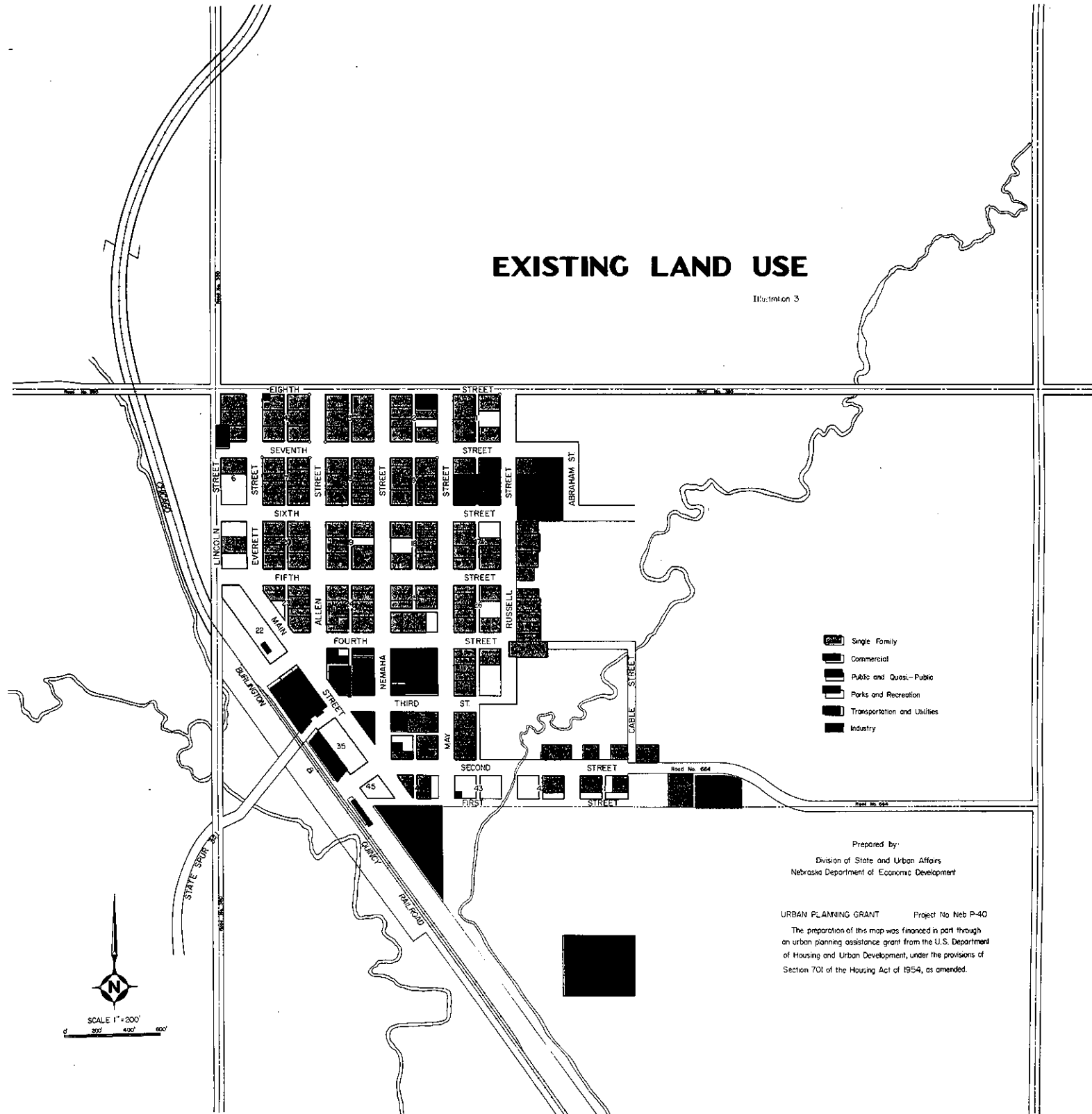
Table 1 shows the different categories in land use by areas, per cent, acres in 100 population within the corporate limits, and acres per 100 population for 11 cities under 1000 in Nebraska. The dominant land uses are single family and streets which occupy almost 75 per cent of the total developed land. The Village contains a total of 182.2 acres or a little more than one-quarter of a square mile. The developed area is only 61.1 per cent of the total land area within the corporate limits.

### Residential Use:

Firth has about 34.4 acres, or 30.8 per cent of its developed land devoted to residential use. All of the residential land is single family, and there are a limited number of mobile homes in the community. Most of the development is north and northeast of the Central Business District. The conditions of most of the houses are good, and densities are relatively low, and there is little overcrowding of land. Firth has lower residential density than other Nebraska communities with comparable sizes.

# EXISTING LAND USE

Illustration 3



- Single Family
- Commercial
- Public and Quasi-Public
- Parks and Recreation
- Transportation and Utilities
- Industry

Prepared by:  
Division of State and Urban Affairs  
Nebraska Department of Economic Development

URBAN PLANNING GRANT Project No. Neb P-40

The preparation of this map was financed in part through an urban planning assistance grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, under the provisions of Section 701 of the Housing Act of 1954, as amended.

Table 1  
EXISTING LAND USE WITHIN THE CORPORATE LIMITS  
Firth, Nebraska  
June, 1968

<u>Land Use Category</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>	<u>Acres Per 100 Population</u>	<u>Acres Per 100 Population for 11 Cities Under 1000 in Nebraska*</u>
<u>DEVELOPED LAND</u>				
Single Family	34.4	30.8	10.4	8.6
Commercial	2.8	2.6	0.8	1.0
Public & Semi-Public	3.5	3.2	1.1	2.8
Parks & Recreation	4.5	4.0	1.4	1.0
Industrial	3.1	2.9	0.9	1.0
Railroad	14.0	12.5	4.2	2.1
Streets & Alleys	<u>49.0</u>	<u>44.0</u>	<u>14.9</u>	<u>9.6</u>
Total developed	111.3	100.0	33.7	26.1
<u>UNDERDEVELOPED LAND</u>				
Vacant or Agriculture	70.8			
Total Acres in City	182.2			

Source: Survey by Nebraska Department of Economic Development

\*Average figures computed by Nebraska Department of Economic Development

#### Commercial:

Commercial covers approximately 2.8 acres or 2.6 per cent of all developed land in the Village. Outside the Central Business District in the residential area, there are 6 home-based businesses and one excavation company on the northwest edge of the community. There is one residential house, two vacant buildings, and two vacant lots in the Central Business District.

#### Public and Semi-Public:

The public and semi-public land uses are represented by churches, school, fire hall, post office, legion hall, and other public buildings. There are 3.5 acres or 3.2 per cent devoted to these uses. The figure of 1.1 acres per 100 population in Firth shows that the public and semi-public land uses are less than half of what are provided in the comparable communities in Nebraska. The fact that both the cemetery and the sewage pond are located outside the corporate limits tends to distort the true picture of what is available in Firth. Adding the 12.1 acres of cemetery and sewage pond that are outside the corporate limits, it indicated that Firth is well above the average of other Nebraska communities.

#### Parks and Recreation:

Land belonging to parks and recreation accounts for 4.5 acres or 4.0 per cent of

the total developed land within the corporate limits. The 1.4 acres per 100 population of park and recreation in Firth is above the range of that found in communities of similar size in Nebraska.

#### Industrial:

The survey revealed that 3.1 acres are used for industrial purposes. Almost all of the industrial development in Firth is along the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad. The 0.9 acres per 100 population is about equal to other Nebraska communities in this category.

#### Railroad:

Railroad rights-of-way totaled 14 acres, or 12.5 per cent of the developed land within the corporate limits. It is located along the west and southwest corporate limits, and is intersected by State Spur 341. In comparison, Firth has twice as many acres per 100 population for the land in railroad uses.

#### Streets and Alleys:

Public streets and alleys rights-of-way cover 49.1 acres or 44 per cent of all the developed land in the Village. This is the largest land use category in Firth. The same holds true in the selected 11 communities under 1000 in Nebraska. This reflects the typical wasteful policy of early subdividers to use rectangular or square blocks in most of the cities in this country.

### Vacant or Agriculture:

A total of 70.8 acres of the Village area lies vacant at the present time. The vacant land includes the vacant lots, agricultural land, and the platted street rights-of-way but are undeveloped. These vacant lands are mostly suitable for future expansion and development.

### Existing Land Use in Planning Area Outside Corporate Limits

The land uses within one mile area of the corporate limits have been tabulated in Table 2. The major land use is agricultural and vacant land which constitutes to almost 95 per cent, or 3505.8 acres. Other land uses include 43 acres of railroad rights-of-way; 12.1 acres of public cemetery and sewage pond; 20.0 acres of highways; 9.3 acres of farm houses; and 4.0 acres of grain storage. Illustration 4 represents the existing land uses in the planning area outside the corporate limits.

The land within the total Firth planning area is 3776.4 acres, or approximately 6 square miles.

### Land Use Problems

The land use problems of Firth can be summarized as follows:

#### General Land Use:

The future trend of growth in Firth will be limited to the north since the Village is bounded by the railroad and the Nemaha River and its tributaries on the west and south. The growth to the east is also restricted due to the construction of a reservoir sometime in 1970.

The land north of the present corporate limits is farm land, and the gentle slopes and topography make it ideal for the site of future growth and development.

Flooding from the Nemaha River will no longer be a problem after the construction of the dam. However, all the storm drainage channels should be properly cleaned and maintained for better water flow.

As indicated in the results of the Community Attitude Survey conducted in May, 1968, some "eyesores" of the community, such as junkyards, junk piles behind businesses and backyards are noticeable. Some community efforts should be made to improve this situation.

Table 2  
EXISTING LAND USE IN PLANNING AREA\*  
Firth, Nebraska  
June, 1968

<u>Land Use Category</u>	<u>Number of Acres Inside Corporate Limits</u>	<u>Number of Acres Outside Corporate Limits in Planning Area</u>	<u>Total Number of Acres</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
Single Family	34.4	9.3	43.7	1.2
Commercial	2.8	0.0	2.8	.1
Public & Semi-public	3.5	12.1	15.6	.4
Parks & Recreation	4.5	0.0	4.5	.1
Industrial	3.1	4.0	7.1	.2
Railroad	14.0	43.0	57.0	1.5
Highway, Streets & Alleys	49.1	20.0	69.1	1.8
Vacant or Agricultural	<u>70.8</u> <i>32.</i>	<u>3505.8</u>	<u>3576.6</u>	<u>94.7</u>
Total	182.2	3594.2	3776.4	100.0

Source: Survey by Nebraska Department of Economic Development

\*Planning Area includes all the land within the corporate limits and one mile beyond corporate limits.

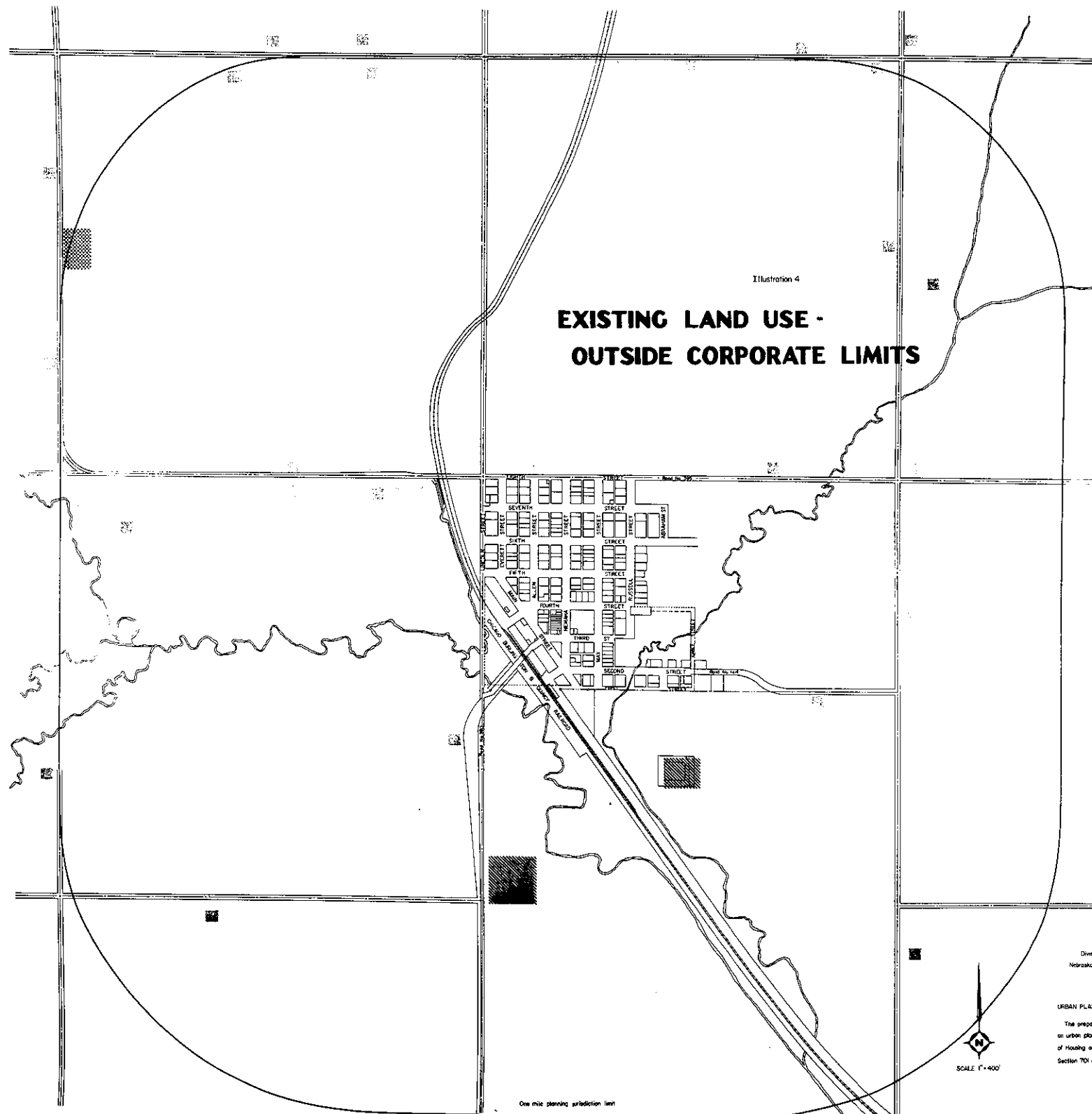





Illustration 4

# **EXISTING LAND USE - OUTSIDE CORPORATE LIMITS**

-  Farmstead
-  Public & Quasi-Public
-  Light Industry-Storage

Prepared by:  
Division of State and Urban Affairs  
Nebraska Department of Economic Development

URBAN PLANNING GRANT Project No. Mo. P-40  
The preparation of this map was financed in part through an urban planning assistance grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, under the provisions of Section 701 of the Housing Act of 1954, as amended.

SCALE 1" = 400'

One mile planning jurisdiction limit



#### Residential:

Although most of the residential houses in Firth are kept in very good condition, there are some houses which show some signs of deterioration. This can be corrected rather easily by proper maintenance and clean up. It should be pointed out that the deterioration of houses will tend to lower the sales value and thus lower the tax revenues accordingly.

#### Commercial:

As pointed out in previous discussion, the Central Business District in Firth is generally deteriorating. There are vacant buildings, vacant lots, and mixed land uses. The building condition is rather poor, and the general appearance of the CBD area is not too attractive. A complete rejuvenation of the Central Business District seems to be a necessity.

#### Public and Semi-Public:

The results of the Firth Community Attitude Survey also indicate a need for a Community Center and a public library. More detail discussion can be found in the Community Facilities Plan.

#### Parks and Recreation:

Firth has not devoted enough land for park and recreation, and there is need for improvements on the Community Park and the

Ball Park. When the reservoir is completed, a detail site planning and improvement program are necessary in order to make the lake into an attractive regional recreation area. By doing so, more tourists and businesses will be attracted. A detail plan will also be suggested in the Community Facilities Plan.

#### Industrial:

The industrial land use in Firth, like many other smaller communities in Nebraska, occupies a very small percentage of the total developed land. Adequate space for expansion, improved thoroughfare accessibility, and protection from incompatible land uses should be provided in Firth in order to be ready for future industrial expansion.

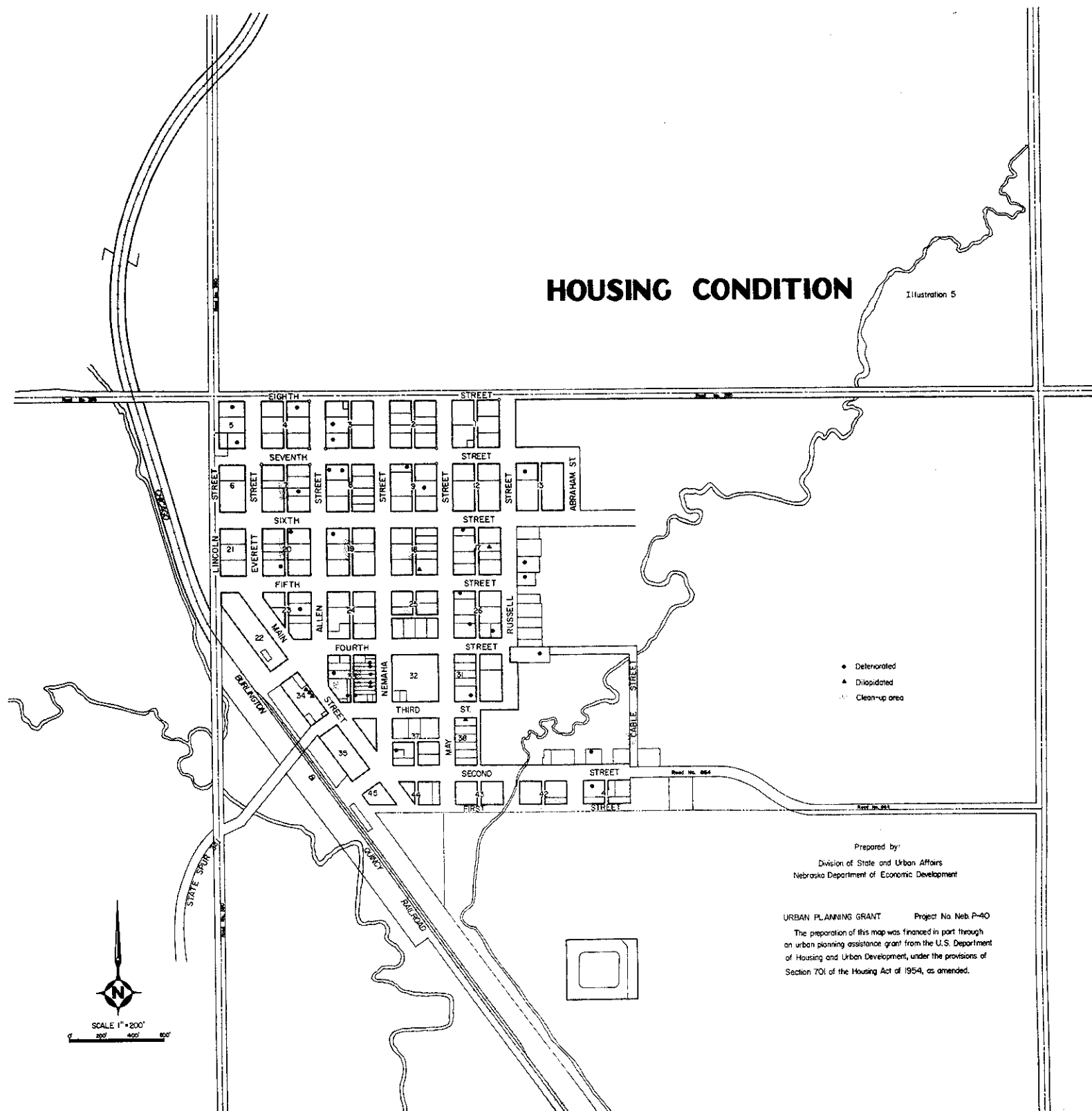
#### Streets and Alleys:

The problems of streets in Firth are: (1) mostly unpaved, and (2) excessive amount of land devoted to streets and alleys.

The uncontrolled street platting in the past is a problem that is difficult to correct. Proper controls can be placed on new subdivisions and developments to avoid high amount of expensive rights-of-way and unrelated patterns of streets and developed land. It is possible, in the case of Firth, to vacate unnecessary sections of presently platted streets in order to develop a new street pattern and release land for more intensive development.

# HOUSING CONDITION

Illustration 5



#### Vacant or Agricultural Land:

The Village has 38.9 per cent of vacant land within the corporate limits. Since almost all of them are developable, they should first be developed before any expansion to the north is occurred. In this case, little or no extension of utilities and community facilities will be necessary in the near future.

#### Environmental Evaluation

Firth is a clean and pleasant community. With the exception of a few houses, majority of them are very well kept. However, some "eye-sores" and mixed land uses are noticeable, especially in the Central Business District.

In September 1968, a field investigation was made of all structures used for residential purposes in the Village. Each structure was classified by the field inspector as sound, deteriorating or dilapidated according to the following definition:

##### Sound -

Structurally sound and in good repair, need no more than minor repairs or normal maintenance.

##### Deteriorated -

Needing major repairs, structural or mechanical, but clearly worth preserving.

##### Dilapidated -

Needing sufficient major repair work that preserving is judged uneconomical or infeasible.

##### Clean-Up Area -

An area that is piled up with junk, trash, abandoned vehicles or farm machinery and needs clean up efforts.

Illustration 5 records the housing conditions in the community. Thirty-two houses are classified as deteriorated, eight as dilapidated and eight clean-up areas.

With the help of the Comprehensive Health Planning, State of Nebraska, a Community Block Survey was also conducted on October 24, 1968, to determine selected environmental factors related to communicable disease control. These factors include land use, exterior housing quality, water supply, human waste disposal, refuse storage, rubble accumulations, junk cars, dilapidated sheds, vacant lots, sanitation, presence of livestock, poultry and dog pens, poor drainage areas and vector harborage. The result of the survey was recorded on Illustration 6. The survey indicated that only two blocks, one of which is Central Business District, have more poor environmental factors than good factors. All the other blocks in the community are either in good condition or in satisfactory condition.

# ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITION

Illustration 6

